



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

News Release

Pacific Islands External Affairs Office

300 Ala Moana Blvd., Room 5-311, Box 50187, Honolulu, Hawaii 96850
Phone: 808 792 9530 Fax: 808 792 9583

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Contact: Barbara Maxfield, 808 792 9530 or 753-0440

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Fish and Wildlife Service Seeks Public Comment on GovGuam Critical Habitat Alternative Proposal

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has reopened its public comment period on proposed critical habitat for three Mariana island species to allow the public to review and comment on a new Government of Guam proposed natural resource management plan. The Service is seeking comments on whether the proposed plan would provide sufficient protection for the species to warrant exclusion of GovGuam lands from final critical habitat designation.

“In accordance with a District Court settlement agreement, we are reopening the comment period for 45 days so that the public has an opportunity to review the proposed plan and submit written comments to us for consideration,” said David B. Allen, Pacific regional director for the Fish and Wildlife Service. “These comments will be important to us as we evaluate whether the proposed plan would adequately protect areas we had proposed as critical habitat. If we determine the plan provides adequate protection, the Endangered Species Act allows us to exclude these lands from critical habitat.”

On October 15, 2002, the Service proposed critical habitat for the Mariana fruit bat, Guam Micronesian kingfisher, and Mariana crow on 24,802 acres on Guam and for the Mariana crow on 6,084 acres on Rota. The majority of lands on Guam were on Air Force and Navy property, but some GovGuam and private lands were also included. Critical habitat was not proposed for the little Mariana fruit bat, Guam bridled white-eye, and Guam broadbill because these species are likely extinct.

On April 1, Guam Governor Felix Camacho transmitted GovGuam’s Critical Habitat Alternative proposal to the Service. In the transmittal letter, the Governor states the critical habitat alternative “better serves the recovery needs of the species and should also be adopted in place of critical habitat.” Copies of the proposed plan are available by calling the Service’s Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office at 808 792 9400 or by downloading it from the Internet at <http://pacificislands.fws.gov>.

Comments should be sent to the Acting Field Supervisor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Islands Fish and Wildlife Office, 300 Ala Moana Blvd., Room 3-122, Box 50088, Honolulu, HI 96850. All comments received by July 19 will be considered in the final critical habitat rule. Previously submitted public comments on the proposed critical habitat rule are still part of the administrative record and need not be resubmitted. According to the settlement agreement, a final critical habitat rule for the Mariana species will be published by October 2.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 544 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 fish and wildlife management offices, and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.